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**The Sources and Nature of Social Representations in a
Multicultural Peer Group: Implications for Friendship and
Inter-group Relationships**

Christina Callow

A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of
Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours
Faculty of Community Studies, Education and Social Sciences,
October 2002.

Declaration

I declare that this written assignment is my own work and does not include:

- (i) material from published sources used without proper acknowledgement; or
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Signed....

.(Christina Callow).

**The Sources and Nature of Social Representations in a Multicultural Peer
Group: Implications for Friendship and Inter-group Relationships**

Abstract

The historical, political and social nature of Australian society provides a backdrop for the ways in which exclusion and inclusion are perpetuated. It is from within this context adolescent identity development and relationship formation occurs. While there is a wealth of literature focussing on inter-group relationships and adolescent development, very little research has focussed on the implications of the wider context on everyday social knowledge, or social representations, held by adolescents in a multicultural peer group. Using social representation theory, this study investigated the social representations adolescents held in relation to ethnic, cultural and national identity. It also investigated the source of these representations, and the implications for friendships and wider group relationships. A peer group of 12 male participants, aged 14-15 years ($M = 15.25$ yrs) was recruited from a state suburban high school and interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Three social representations emerged. These included: Cultural Dominance; Maintaining the Status Quo and Cultural Tolerance and Acceptance. These were considered in relation to other themes, including friendships and barriers to inter-group relationships. Implications for identity development, friendship and wider relationships are discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

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Supervisor: Dr. Christopher Sonn

Submitted: October, 2002.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the reference is made to the text.

Signature.. (Christina Callow).

Date.....11/3/2003.....

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The Sources and Nature of Social Representations in a Multicultural Peer Group:
Implications for Friendship and Inter-group Relationships

Australian society is derived from the intersection of influences of the past, politics and the social environment. One of the most significant influences crossing all these areas is immigration. The influences of various immigration policies, from colonialist days, to the White Australia policy and to multicultural reforms in the 1970's, have had a significant impact on the 'type' of contemporary society Australia has become (Vasta, 1993). However, with multicultural reforms in place for some 30 years now, it would be expected there would be a wider appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity, and enhanced valuing of people from other cultures.

One would arguably find evidence of this enhanced appreciation in many facets of modern Australian life. For example, the introduction of international and multicultural days in schools and workplaces would suggest a deeper understanding of cultural and ethnic differences, with a desire to celebrate these through activities and other symbolic events. The expression of multiculturalism as part of the common dialogue could suggest the permeation of this concept into broader society.

While there is evidence of this permeation, equity and equality for all are not achieved. Racism and discrimination are still experienced by individuals from ethnic minorities. This racism, is not just evident in everyday observable events, it is also present at a systemic level in society. For example, racism can be subtly perpetuated through vehicles like the media (Emmison, 1997; Lloyd, 2002). Racism has clear implications for the social and psychological development of people in all groups.

There is a strong body of literature that emphasises the exploration of social and psychological development for minority and majority individuals through their inter-group contact (Tajfel, 1981; Turner & Oakes, 1989). Research has considered

the ways people interact with each other and the implications of this contact. For example, ethnocentrism is one feature of inter-group relations that can lead to negative inter-group differentiation (Tajfel, 1981). Other inter-group interactions can lead to social categorisation of people through their attachment to specific social identities. Alternatively, the impact of enhanced group relationships, for both ethnic majority and minority group members can lead to more positive identities and enhanced self-esteem and wellbeing.

While differences between dominant and non-dominant groups have been studied extensively (Berry, 1990; Phinney, 1990); Tajfel, 1981) one specific group worthy of consideration in relation to these issues is the adolescent peer group. The peer group has been studied for its significance in adolescents' lives, including its influences in identity development and in providing social support (Harris, 1995; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). However, little attention has been given to everyday peer group interactions and communication. Mediated by the wider cultural and social context these interactions can have implications for identity and relationships (Newman & Newman, 2001). Hill and Thomas (2000) argue, identity development is borne out of the contexts one finds oneself in and these contexts and their negotiation define us. However, individuals' experiences are included in this process.

Thus, by firstly examining the interplay of these factors, at a time when identity and friendships are salient to adolescents, this study presents a new opportunity to investigate these issues from a perspective not well understood. This is also important given the perpetuation of adolescent studies that continue to focus at an individual level of understanding.

Secondly, by using a peer group of multicultural adolescents, this study will investigate the social and cultural knowledge adolescents extract from the wider

cultural environment to use as a basis to form beliefs and knowledge; their social reality. The creation and communication of this knowledge, or social representations, may be undertaken unwittingly by adolescents, leading to exclusionist or inclusionist views towards particular people. This may not only implicate their identity development and friendships, it may also present further barriers to community relationships, useful for healthier growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Finally, through adolescents' uncovering social representations and explaining how they impact identity and relationships, this study will highlight that merely perpetuating multicultural policies or conducting further individualistic studies, are not sufficient strategies to deal with issues of racism and exclusion. That is psychological and social strategies must target the implications of this wider context where racism and discrimination are embedded. Understanding the adolescents' social space is a first step in this process.

With the main thrust of the problem outlined and given the salience of the Australian context to this research, it is firstly critical to provide a concise overview of main contributions to this current environment. This will demonstrate the necessity of viewing adolescents from within this position.

The Historical, Political and Social Context of Multicultural Australia

While contemporary Australian adolescents are situated in a modern western culture espousing democratic values and ideals, arguably past practices and processes will influence development and behaviour. Thus this context must be examined.

Australia's social and political history is built on inclusive and exclusive immigration policies (Jayaraman, 2000). These can be traced from colonisation in the 1790's, with the inclusion and domination of British and Europeans, to the exclusion of Aboriginal people. Post colonial policies, directed at Aboriginal people,

were also discriminatory and have had a lasting impact on identity (Dudgeon, 2000).

Following colonisation, the enactment of the White Australia policy in 1901 also resulted in practices of exclusion for non-European migrants, particularly Chinese (Sherington, 1980). This monoculturalist policy implemented to restore failing economic ties with Great Britain created a pure white image of Australian nationhood and identity that was important to maintain. The following extract from the Bulletin (as cited in Sherington, 1980, p. 91) sets out sentiments in 1901:

It is impossible to have a large coloured alien population in the midst of a white population without a half-caste population growing up between the two. India proves that...The United States show it...Queensland shows it already to an alarming extent. And Australia thinks highly enough of its British and Irish descent to keep the race pure.

These sentiments were strong enough to sustain this policy for some 60 years.

However, with mounting pressure and public disapproval, the White Australia policy was expunged in 1973 (Bruer & Power, 1993), setting the scene for today's multicultural policies. These policies have sought to redress issues of inequity and social injustice for ethnic minorities (Poole, 1985). However power imbalances and exclusion still occur, suggesting their ineffectiveness (Bruer & Power, 1993).

As such, writers now articulate the policy's deficits. Smolicz (1997) suggests white Australians adopt two interpretations of multiculturalism. They hold flexible values, expecting it to accommodate all diversity in society or they hold narrow views based on Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic values. This idea has been extended by Hage (1998) inferring an acceptance and perpetuation of multiculturalism by the majority is a position of tolerance, allowing white values and dominance to continue. This can be seen through tokenism and the selection of 'good bits' from other

cultures. Hage (1998) hypothesises multiculturalism is held in opposition to racism, a position allowing it further support in containing minorities and their voices.

Another criticism of multiculturalism is it contributes to reverse racism with minority groups perceived to have too much privilege and status (Jayaraman, 2000). Evidence of this is found in the Hansonist policies of the 1990's, which sparked public debate about the acceptance of immigrants and refugees from overseas. Hage (1998) infers this is borne out of majority individuals perceiving a lack of power or invasion of their space. However, this heightened contest for resources and power has led to the deteriorating inter-group relations and further alienation of minorities.

A final issue Jayaraman (2000) highlights is its perceived threat to national unity and identity. As Vasta (1993, p. 214) suggests it is feared popular constructions like "...the English language, a laconic sense of humour, a matter of fact egalitarianism, a tolerant idea of a fair go and a masculine emphasis on mate-ship", have broken down. This perspective still dominates advertising with many images depicting traditional beliefs (Phillips, 1998). In opposition it is argued Australian identity is built on layers of cultural diversity (Smolicz, 1997). Identity and culture stem from the vicissitudes of the past and present, a fact often overlooked or ignored.

Whilst the history of immigration and subsequent cultural policies will impact Australian adolescents, it is important to emphasise the implications of globalisation. Globalisation has resulted in further appreciation of differences, similarities and the complexities of various cultures (Cooper & Denner, 1998). However, it has also seen mass communication infiltrate the globe, supposedly uniting nations and bringing down barriers (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). How this impacts identity and culture remains to be seen, but recent research suggests while it impacts tastes in music and film, Australian identity and culture remain strong (Emmison, 1997).

Taken together, the context of Australian society, including its history, politics and social policies and the advent of globalisation has implications for adolescent development. This context provides the basis for ideology and knowledge drawn on to form beliefs and opinions. It also provides them with vital information about 'who' they are and how they should live.

With this in mind, it is now useful to explore the literature on adolescent psychological and social development. This provides a basis to argue that research in this domain must move beyond micro level examinations and explanations and use a wider more expansive approach of investigation.

The Developing Adolescent

Adolescence is the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood (Rice, 1996). It is a significant transitional period marked by physical, social and psychological change. As such, the psychological literature is replete with theoretical perspectives and research studies. Main perspectives will be alluded to here, with a caveat that adolescents are heterogeneous.

Theoretical perspectives of adolescence have evolved from Hall's (1904) biological theory to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems approach (as cited in Rice, 1996). While Hall (1904) posited adolescence is a time of storm and stress, Erikson (1968) revolutionised the field, proposing adolescents' move through conflicts to develop a static positive identity (as cited in Rice, 1996). He postulated those not searching for identity will have problems, like role conflicts or internalising and reinforcing negative identities. For ethnic minorities, immigration issues could further amplify this.

Criticisms of Erikson's (1968) theory are its failure to explain how identity stability and variability occurs concurrently, its failure to consider female/male

variability and a failure to recognise ego identity development continues in adulthood (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001; Rice, 1996). Other criticisms are its narrow focus on the individual, lack of attention to biology and no focus on the wider environment.

Cognitive approaches draw together cognition, biology and the environment Selman's (1977) social cognitive extension of Piaget's (1967) theory (as cited in Rice, 1996) emphasises the importance of understanding relationships, through social knowledge. Developed in social situations and through cultural norms, knowledge develops further with maturity and is critical to understanding others' views (Waldinger et al., 2002). This is salient given adolescents' desires for close relationships and the centrality of their peer group. A criticism of this approach is it emphasises the importance of the environment, but focuses on social relationships.

The contemporary ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) considers various layers in a person's environment and the links between them. Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlights a number of hypotheses salient to adolescents in multicultural contexts. These are that positive development will be improved the more a person is involved in diverse social structures and the more culturally diverse the environment, the more positive the development will be. Adolescents benefit from involvement in not just peer groups but mixing with diverse community groups.

While this approach highlights the roles of the wider cultural context and the communication of shared knowledge to development, it does not explain how shared group views develop. These would be useful to understanding how issues like exclusion and racism are communicated between adolescents and how this may contribute to negative development.

From the ecological approach to earlier biological views, main adolescent perspectives stress various issues. They indicate the importance of identity

development and social interaction at this time. This includes not only developing relationships but in learning to value others' views. Finally they demonstrate a progression in psychological research, now valuing the wider context in this development.

Given this, it is important to extend this argument to consider the theoretical models of identity development and social relationships for adolescents in the Australian context. How effectively these models and theories attend to issues of diversity and change, along with the impact of the environment, will be examined.

Theoretical Models of Identity

In examining the literature on cultural, ethnic, racial and national identity models there is a lack of cohesion on definitions and approaches to researching constructs (Frable, 1997; Thomas, 1986). Given this, it is salient to consider each mode of identity and theoretical models germane to them. However, a concise overview is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Modes of Identity and Main Limitations

Modes identity	Main theoretical approaches	Main limitations
Cultural identity	Berry's acculturation model	Lack research with majority adolescents Identity is fixed
	Kim's bi-directional model of cross cultural adaptation	Lack research with majority adolescents Identity is fixed.
Ethnic identity	Berry's acculturation model	As above
	Social Identity theory	No consideration to developmental issues
	Erikson's developmental model	No attention to group interaction factors
	Phinney's model of ethnic identity	Lacks focus on wider context
Racial identity	Cross's stage model of Nigrescence	Problematic if race socially constructed
	Kim's model for Asian Americans	Problematic if race socially constructed
	Helms' model of white identity	Problematic if race socially constructed
National identity	Social identity theory	As above
	Phinney's model of ethnic identity	As above

The first perspective, cultural identity has been predominantly defined from Berry 's (1970, 1990, 2001) acculturation theory. Here research has shown that acculturation processes, where minorities come into contact with majorities can have positive or negative implications for minority cultural identity development (Eyou, Adair & Dixon, 2000; Phinney, 1990; Young, Lujan & Dixon, 1998). From here, it has been further posited that majorities, including adolescents, cannot define their own cultural identity, believing it is something belonging to 'ethnic' others (Perry, 2001). Arguably this can lead to the retention of power and dominance by majority people, suggesting a pressing need to allow white people, like adolescents, scope to talk of the adoption of cultural identity.

If cultural identity is not only for minorities, it is better defined as "the degree to which a person is familiar with and prefers a particular lifestyle" (Thomas, 1986, p283). This allows for the process of immigration and acculturation, but accepts identity is an active process all people can adopt. From here, Berry's (1970, 1990, 2001) models and Kim's (1988) bi-directional model of cross-cultural adaptation (as cited in Young, et al., 1998) are deficient. While explaining the importance of multicultural integration and implications for marginalisation, they do not consider majority identities (Berry, 2001; Eyou et al., 2000; Phinney, 1990). They also fail to consider changes during adolescence, seeing identity as fixed, a notion disputed in the literature (Phinney, 1990; Yeh & Huang, 1996). While a variant of Kim's (1988) model (as cited in Young et al., 1998) is its examination of communication between minorities and majorities linking the individual, their predisposition and environment, it excludes wider systems like politics, which convey information to adolescents.

Along with deficits in cultural identity, ethnic identity suffers similarly.

Particularly given that terms are used interchangeably in psychology (Frale, 1997). Also while ethnic identity is defining self in relation to one's group, aspects beyond this are unclear (Phinney, 1990). Berry (1970, 1990, 2001) suggests it is important during acculturation where Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001) suggest it is a subjective exploration of group belonging. Research verifies this, with adolescents' identity related to both, although white adolescents appear unable to explain it (Roberts et al., 1999). For dominant groups, it seems irrelevant.

Given definitional deficits, most research centres on four models. The first, Berry's (1970, 1990, 2001) acculturation model experiences comparable problems as in cultural identity. Similarly, Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory, which has been instrumental in demonstrating a need for strong group affiliation to develop positive esteem and relationships, and the salience of multiple social identities, does not consider adolescent development phases. Most research has also been adult focussed (Roberts et al., 1999).

In contrast Erikson's (1959) developmental approach and Phinney's (1990) three-stage model consider progress through stages to fixed identity. Research here has demonstrated that ethnic identity depends on commitment to ethnicity and age with older adolescents demonstrating a clearer sense of identity (Roberts et al., 1999). While Erikson (1959) only considers developmental aspects, Phinney (1990) includes group interaction factors, along with variables like parental influence (Phinney, Romero, Nava & Huang, 2001; Roberts et al., 1999). However, these perspectives do not attend to ethnic identity development in diverse environments, enforcing the notion that identity is an individualistic process.

Like ethnic identity, racial identity is abstruse with models used interchangeably. However, it is often simply defined by physical appearances, like

skin colour (Frable, 1997). Here, specific models have emerged including Cross's (1978) model for black Americans, Kim's (1981) Asian American model (as cited in Phinney, 1990) and Helms' (1984, 1986) models for whites/Europeans. Aside from their use in examining specific groups, Helms' (1984, 1986) models shifts the focus from the 'other' to the majority, enabling a critical view of white identity to occur. However, these models ignore developmental aspects and do not consider race is socially constructed (Kincheloe, 1999). They evade the intricacies of race, classifying people into neat physically derived bundles.

Aside from racial identity, a final mode worth exploring is national identity. National identity has been investigated through social identity theory and Phinney's (1990) ethnic identity models. However, due to its macro status, little psychological research has been undertaken, though Thomas and Nikora (1996) found New Zealand adolescents defined national identity using cultural, ethnic and racial elements, like language, lifestyle and birth place. The dominant majority view of ethnicity and minorities as absent from national identity emphasised ideological processes at work.

From a sociological perspective, Phillips (1998) infers Australian national identity is seen as a position of inclusion or exclusion resonating from the traditional nationalistic values and beliefs people hold. Furthermore, with greater endorsement of traditional, patriotic views, people will display militaristic, discriminatory and anti-multicultural intentions. This view provides a useful starting point. Given the implications of exclusion/inclusion arising from national identity, it is useful to investigate adolescents' perceptions in this area, as these may be represented by nationalistic Australian beliefs.

As evidenced in the aforementioned literature, adolescent identity is a complex salient process. However, most research conducted in this area has

considered the process as an individual one with models not flexible enough to consider wider environmental or systemic influences, like the impact of media vehicles. While there is no consensus to whether identity is fixed, flexible or socially constructed, there are also no integrated identity models that can consider more than one type of identity simultaneously. Finally models do not consider adolescents' perspectives on what impacts identity. To fulfil these criteria, research may step in a different direction and look beyond the micro level.

While identity is an important concept for adolescence and research, friendships are just as critical. However, as will be seen, the individualistic focus taken in identity research has also been borne out in research of friendships. Main theoretical aspects are now discussed.

Adolescent Friendships

Friendship is important for emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing (Hartup, 1995). Adolescents, though, may have best friends or casual acquaintances, in differing situations. Friendship has been defined as the "voluntary interdependence between two persons over time that is intended to facilitate social emotional goals... and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection and mutual assistance" (Hays, 1988, p. 395). However, this overlooks cultural differences and socio-historical influences (Krappman, 1996).

It also fails to grasp the salience of friendships in the peer group, important for identity development; for contrasting one's self with adults and for gaining emotional and social support (Harris, 1995; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). For immigrant adolescents, peer groups provide a place where new culture, customs and language can be learnt. This is important for acceptance (Harris, 1995; Suzuki, 1997). Given these factors and the finding that friendships are mostly studied in

dyadic terms, peer groups should not be overlooked or underestimated.

With this in mind, other characteristics of friendship include intimacy and reciprocity (Buhrmester, 1996; Hamm, 2000; Hays, 1988; Shulman, Laursen, Kalman & Karpovsky, 1997). Intimacy, peaks in adolescence and is necessary for developing future romances (Hartup, 1995). Emotional, material and cognitive reciprocity is also important with the frequency and likelihood of exchanges determining the strength and duration of later relationships (Hays, 1988).

While important, adolescents also attempt to strike a balance between developing individuality and closeness (Shulman et al., 1997). So, in developing identity, adolescents want to be similar to friends, to develop trust, loyalty and exclusivity and engage in shared activities (Hays, 1988). This can lead to conformity, resulting in violations of personal or social standards (Hays, 1988). While this is salient for all adolescents, non-western characteristics like collectivity and its role have not been well addressed (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

Along with these characteristics, there are identified dimensions for friendship choices like similarity, attractiveness, gender, behaviours, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996; Hamm, 2000; Hartup, 1995). For same gender friendships, males focus on power, control and achievement, through joint activities, where females focus on relationships (Buhrmester, 1996; Hays, 1988; Shulman et al., 1997). Males are more protective of group boundaries (Gavin & Furman, 1989), suggesting less inter-group transience.

Aside from gender, variables like race and ethnicity have been investigated, though findings are mixed. Race seems important with influences coming from parents and peers, rather than one's own racial prejudices (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). However, in research adolescents may not divulge these prejudices.

Furthermore, constructs like race may not be salient unless a person is under threat (Boulton & Smith, 1996; Hubbert, Gudykunst & Guerrero, 1999).

Like race, the extent of the role played by ethnicity in friendships is unclear though many factors, particularly in cross ethnic friendships, mitigate the processes. These include acculturation, socialisation, family influence, interaction in mainstream society and psychological distance (Hamm, 2000; Shih, 1998). Given this extent, it is clear any study of friendships across ethnicity should consider the intersection of the individual, their identity, their relationships, their social groups and the cultural milieu, in which they are situated.

In reviewing dominant theoretical approaches, however, this is not the picture presented. Main approaches, like developmental and family perspectives, trace the importance of friendship through growth processes or family relationship processes, like attachment, arguing these impact future relationships (Doyle & Markiewicz, 1996; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). These emphasise individual development in dyadic relationships, but it seems accepted many mediating variables are at play.

Of attempts to consider specific contexts, a paucity of studies has focused on the peer group or school environment. Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory has been used to study differences in same sex adolescents' groups (Gavin & Furman, 1989) and combined with group socialisation theory to show the importance of peer group socialisation for minority adolescents (Harris, 1995). In schools, while school philosophy has been implicated (Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987) it is argued deeper, cultural, historical and political factors are at play (Hamm, 2000).

This notion of cultural influence is taken up by Krappman (1996, p.21) suggesting "culture...defines the leeway that friends have as they balance social demands and concerns with individual desires." Krappman (1996) further infers

socio-cultural traditions and systems play restrictive roles, as they compete to influence adolescents. This is achieved not just by direct environmental influence but through indirect means like traditions diffused through families and groups.

At this juncture, adolescents must negotiate these and their own spaces, with their agency (Shanahan & Hood, 2000), in concert with power imbalances, restrictions and influences, which will influence development, particularly identity. Collier and Bornman's (1999) research of South African adolescents recently showed this, emphasising the interplay of culture, history, identity and individual agency. British adolescents' recent experiences also stress the bounds of prejudice, history and politics in relations and developing self-esteem (Marshall, Stenner & Lee, 1999).

As is becoming evident, like identity, adolescent friendship research generally continues to take the traditional psychological walk, with its emphasis on individuals and dyadic relationships. It is not denied that uncovering friendship characteristics like ethnicity and gender serve a purpose and are instrumental in guiding research. However, friendship approaches are narrow and reductionist in their views of adolescents' lived experiences, how these experiences are negotiated in context and then how these impact development.

Thus, adolescents inhabit the context of Australian society and it is in this sphere that development, like friendship making, takes place. However, while Australia espouses multicultural intentions, amongst other highlighted notions, it also serves a fundamental purpose to provide order and stability. This order and stability must be transferred as knowledge to individuals and groups for this process to be complete. However, given the power of various transportation systems and social groups, information and knowledge can be flavoured and distorted. It may even garner greater power and momentum on reaching its destination.

Given the impact of powerful processes, any attempt to understand the role of the wider context in adolescents' lives must consider how social knowledge is manifested, transmitted, maintained and changed. Two research approaches used include the cognitive paradigm and broader cultural frameworks, recently advocated as useful to studying exclusion. Main aspects of these are now discussed, arguing a more sophisticated framework incorporating both is needed for the current problem.

Social Knowledge and its Transmission

The rise of the cognitive paradigm in the 1960's saw a focus on the individual and their internal thought processes. However, with this came an increased interest in cognitive concepts like attributes, impression formation and stereotypes (Pepitone, 1986). From a social psychological perspective, these concepts paved the way for inquiry into social knowledge and behaviour. Social knowledge is derived from individual knowledge and is transmitted through systemic layers (Von Cranach, 1998). It can also be found in the collective memory of groups.

Take stereotypes held by adolescents for example. These cognitively formed beliefs, based on traits, are causally linked to prejudice the evaluation of individuals and groups. These evaluations can be held by groups of adolescents, and can lead to discriminatory behaviour, like exclusion (Mackie & Smith, 1998). Their prejudicial views can also be embedded in more complex social structures, like schools, where they may be further perpetuated and distributed.

While the cognitive paradigm helps explain social cognition, it does this by assuming the centrality of the individual in the process. It fails to truly capture how social knowledge is mediated between systems and social reality. It also fails to explain how it moves through systems to form the basis of the common culture (Sommer, 1998; Von Cranach, 1998). Learnt, shared and upheld by most people,

culture provides us with amongst other things, a common lifestyle, ways to dress and a range of acceptable verbal expressions. It also provides us with readymade definitions for social problems (Hewstone & Augoustinos, 1998). It can also be a way of not seeing positive minority differences and experiences that should be valued (Jones, 1998).

Furthermore, the transportation of social knowledge is not a passive process consuming adolescents and groups. Through communication and language, it is an active process within smaller social systems (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). To this end, individuals will act upon what is known and modify it. However, as language and communication, are taken for granted processes, their power may be ignored or disregarded. This is in deference to the media, which is a powerful communicator.

At this expanded level then, the cognitive approach cannot account for the adjunctive processes occurring in social knowledge transmission. It also centres on causality from an individual perspective. One alternative with the explanatory power to take broader systems into account is cultural frameworks. However, there are shortcomings in these approaches. This includes the inability to integrate broader levels of analysis with individual acquisition and transmission of social knowledge. In essence, it shifts the argument to the environmental end of the continuum.

In considering cultural models used in research, there are variations on how culture is perceived and utilised. For example, the eco-cultural systems model of Harkness (1992) and the multiple worlds' perspective of Phelan, Davidson and Cao (1991) look at child and adolescent development from the stable cultural structures people are located in, in a similar way to the ecological systems approach of Bronfenbrenner (1979). While these models consider knowledge transfer, only the multiple worlds' perspective considers how adolescents' attitudes are transferred into

collective or socially held beliefs and norms through adaptation. However, the environment plays a pivotal role in both approaches.

In contrast, the collective constructionist model of Markus and Kitayama (1991), like social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) does consider how social knowledge is expressed and perpetuated. Both models indicate the expression of attitudes and beliefs can lead to exclusion. Though, in using individual and group level analysis, they do not account for notable cultural influences like music, globalisation processes or cultural mixing processes, as occurring in Australia (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). These models see the individual as central to the production of social knowledge.

From this picture, cultural models have attempted to address the acquisition of knowledge through the wider contexts of children and adolescents. However, they target specific structures or operate at group levels of analysis. Most are incapable of analysing how social knowledge is produced and transmitted by individuals within these layers. Furthermore, they do not capture the everyday discourse perpetuated in common groups, like peer groups. This is important to social knowledge transmission and unless a more flexible integrated model is used, it is not possible to discover how knowledge is perpetuated and implicates adolescents' lives.

As such, a better way of understanding how adolescents acquire and perpetuate shared knowledge is through the alternative framework of Moscovici's (1984) social representation theory. This flexible framework is now discussed.

Social Representations

Membership in a peer group, a minority or majority group, in a local community in Australian society gives access to various levels and types of social knowledge. Through social representation theory, groups, amongst others, are the sources of this information (Moscovici, 1984) an argument also posited in

Rappaport's (1993) narrative approach, where community and cultural narratives held by groups can depict dominance or can be catalysts towards liberation and change. However, in social representation theory, social knowledge allows individuals to familiarise themselves with unusual ideas located in wider contexts. Thus, images and ideas are extracted from abstract areas like ideology and altered by speech into evolving concepts, individually acquired but socially understood.

At a detailed level, social representations are a network of central and peripheral ideas with structural and dynamic components (Moscovici, 1984). Structure includes the representational field, knowledge and attitudes toward a target, where the dynamic acquisition processes include anchoring and objectification (Flick, 1998). In anchoring, unfamiliar ideas are simplified, classified and integrated into memory while objectification allows for abstract ideas to be transferred to concrete ones (Moscovici, 1984). Adolescents can create refined schemes by omitting some elements, but highlighting others.

From these processes adolescents can socially create representations about entities and people. From abstraction to familiar, representations are transmitted to knowledge that is continued. However, structures like the media may play an intermediary role in processes, by refining ideas (Sommer, 1998). From here, it becomes easier for adolescents to identify knowledge and transfer it to suitable schemes, impacting them now and in the future.

Investigations into social representations have been diverse. Studies have focussed on the role of language and communication in forming representations (Lau, Chiu & Lee, 2001; Markova et al., 1998; Potter & Wetherell, 1998). Others have considered them at various analysis levels proposed by Doise (1984). These include individual, inter-individual, social and ideological level studies (Bennett, Lyons, Sani

& Barrett, 1998; Kim, 1999; Staerkle, Clemence & Doise, 1998; Verkuyten, Rood-Pijpers, Elferris & Hessing, 1994). While studies have focussed on adolescents' understanding of discrimination and the re-construction of cultural identity (Nygren, 1998; Verkuyten, Kinket & Wielen, 1997), none have considered a multicultural adolescent group.

Most studies have failed to address the issue of action or agency that was central to Moscovici's (1984) thesis. Taking a Durkheimian perspective of agency, Moscovici (1984) infers action results from communication in the culture of social groups. So in a multicultural peer group, social representations would guide members' actions, especially in relation to issues like belonging. However here, individuals are passive beings, at the whim of social influence.

An opposing view is agency sits outside cultural influences with individuals making their own choices (Ratner, 2000). Here adolescents' traits and cognition will affect actions. However, in social life, individuals are inseparable from culture, which impacts choice and behaviour (Ratner, 2000). As such, it is better to take an eclectic approach, positioning agency in between. So, while cultural structures, groups and roles are influential, the individual has unique experiences, based on traits and influence, which are mediated by their needs and interests (Rasmussen, 1999). In marrying methods, cultural influence and individuality can both be considered.

With this extension, social representations are a useful frame for considering implications of social knowledge on the peer group. It links knowledge with wider contexts explaining how communication perpetuates this. It attempts to address issues of causality from opposite ends of the continuum in cognitive and cultural perspectives. That is, causes we attribute to the environment or to individuals are

determined first and foremost by representations we hold (Moscovici, 1984).

However, this is not definitive and further research is needed to build on this.

The Current Study and Research Questions

Given the preceding arguments, an understanding of how adolescents negotiate identity, friendships and wider relationships, mediated by context and communication, can be understood with social representations (Moscovici, 1984). It allows a better understanding of how ideas become everyday ones. The theory will help explain how adolescents understand issues like racism through peer group interaction. Finally it allows for multilevel interpretations, like ideological and inter-group levels. The framework uncovers core representations and peripheral representations, or themes, external to the nucleus. Adolescents can express the nature and source of representations and their mediation. Revealing these may assist in forming positive representations of themselves, others and their country.

With the paucity of research investigating social representations held by adolescents, this study is interested in how ethnic minority and majority adolescents speak about identity and friendships from the context of their environment. Specifically, it seeks to investigate the following questions: 1) what are the social representations adolescents talk about in relation to ethnic, cultural and national identity and what are the sources of these representations, 2) how do these implicate (inhibit/facilitate) their friendships, and 3) to what extent do they implicate other cross-cultural relationships?

Method

In conjunction with Moscovici's (1984) conceptual framework, the eclectic perspective of agency, suggested by Rasmussen (1999) was used. This allows for circumstances where adolescents made decisions based not only on their own experiences, but with their traits and their links with wider cultural and social factors.

This research utilised a qualitative approach of investigation. Qualitative research, through holistic, inductive and naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to get close to individuals and their circumstances (Patton, 1980). This results in a deep understanding of the subject matter within "local contexts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). The ability to capture adolescents' subjective meanings and their 'voices' was especially important. Also, placing researcher and participants in a subjective relationship (Creswell, 1998), allows a partnership to occur where participants can state what is important and have more of a stake in the process.

Participants

Participants were 12 adolescent males aged from 14 to 15 years ($M = 15.25$ years). In a qualitative study, up to 12 participants are considered adequate to reach saturation (Creswell, 1998). Others suggest no more than 15; otherwise the data becomes thin and too cumbersome to manage (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In light of this, the sample size was appropriate and adequate.

The sample was recruited from the researcher's social networks and a Perth school known for its ethnic diversity. A male peer group with ages 14-15 years were the selection criteria. To select diverse participants a maximum variety sampling technique was used (Lyons, 2000; Morse, 1994). As such, the term 'peer group' was applied loosely as at times it was better to select an adolescent from a diverse background even if on the group's periphery. Participants were in year 10 at school.

Due to cultural differences between ethnic minority males and females, only males were selected (Rigby, 1990).

Participants' place of birth included Israel, England, Malaysia and Australia. A number were born in Australia to parents from China, Malaysia, India, England, and Singapore. One adolescent born in Australia to South African and Australian parents identified as South African. Participants lived with parents and family members however one lived with a guardian, due to parents' work overseas. Two lived in blended families and one in a single parent family with his mother. Fathers' occupations included chef, medical doctor, plumber and computer analyst and mothers' included training consultant, accountant, home duties and teacher's aide. At the time of interviewing, participants had lived in their current suburb between 1 and 15 years, with average residence 4.8 years.

Instruments

A semi-structured open ended interview schedule was used in this study (Breakwell, 1995; Smith, 1995). The schedule contained twenty questions designed to tap areas of interest (Refer to Appendix E). Questions were developed using theoretical support from the literature, including areas of identity, friendship and social representations. Marshall et al. (1999) and Thomas and Nikora's (1996) studies of young people assisted question formation. Questions were placed in an order allowing rapport to be established and moved down to more detailed questions (Smith, 1995). Examples of questions included: "Could you tell me about your family background?" "If I asked you about your ethnic identity, what would you tell me?" "If you had to list five things representing Australia, what would they be and how important is it your friends have a similar or different background to yours?"

Prior to interviews, a colleague read the interview schedule to ensure

readability and face validity. Then a pilot test of questions was conducted with two males (mean age = 15 years) (Breakwell, 1995). Questions were altered and refined for clarity. Four questions were added; ensuring responses about the extent of participation in other ethnic groups was tapped. Also due to the nature of the topic, it was evident a more conversational interview style was needed where researcher and participant engage in an interactive dialogue, empowering participants and allowing the researcher to check understanding (Limerick & Limerick, 1998). This gives participants a better grasp of the material and is more in keeping with Moscovici's (1984) perspective on the elicitation of social representations. Given the number of questions and to ensure data reliability, interviews were tape-recorded using a micro cassette recorder.

Procedure

The peer group was isolated through the researcher's social networks. The researcher then made face to face contact with each participant and parents or guardians, informing them about the study and its general aims. Interested adolescents were given an information package containing a letter that outlined general information about the study and contact names and phone numbers for any further information or queries (See Appendix A). Participants were also given a consent form to sign (Appendix B). Parents and guardians were also given an information package containing general information letter about the study (Appendix C) and a consent form to give approval for adolescents' participation (Appendix D). Consent forms outlined issues of confidentiality and anonymity and stressed the need for tape-recording of interviews. Once signed, participants were contacted to make an interview time and to specify interview location, which was at school or in their home. All interviews were conducted in participants' homes.

Prior to interviews, adolescents were reminded that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. They were reminded that interviews would be tape-recorded. All interviews were conducted with a semi-structured schedule, using a conversational approach. As such, the researcher was able to deviate where appropriate (Smith, 1995). A funnelling technique was also used, beginning with general questions and funnelling to specific ones. This allowed participants to give their views before probing specific areas, at the same time allowing the researcher to target points of interest.

Each interview lasted between 50 and 100 minutes with the average being approximately 80 minutes. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were given the opportunity to contribute anything further or to make any comments that they felt appropriate. Comments and the researcher's reflections and observations about the interview were entered into a reflective journal. Participants were debriefed and advised of a contact person for concerns or further queries. The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim as soon as possible, after interviews.

Data Analysis

With all interviews transcribed, inductive data analysis and reduction were guided by the methods of qualitative analysis outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). As such, data analysis began from the point of tape transcriptions. Then a thematic content analysis was conducted. Each transcript was read several times, with notes of important or interesting points made in the left hand margin. Important sentences and comments related to the research questions were underlined in pen. This is an initial way of summarising and interpreting the data. Further readings of each transcript revealed more refined points and concepts, which were noted in the right hand margin.

During this process, the four analysis levels of social representations, outlined by Doise (1984) were used. These include the psychological/intra-individual level or individual's environmental experiences, the inter-individual and intra-situational levels used in structured research, the situational interactions focussing on differences in position or social status, like group membership influences and the ideological beliefs held by individuals in situations. At each level, it is possible to further superimpose any of the four levels of analysis highlighted.

As a way of refining processes and to enable better comparisons a question ordered matrix was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Due to their enhanced structure, matrices help provide a more systematic approach to data analysis and reduction. The matrix used listed participants in the left-hand column with remaining columns containing main research questions and important conceptual issues. For example, it included a column seeking to uncover how individual agency, was employed by adolescents. Data was entered into the matrix using a descriptive approach however its structure also allowed for explanatory intent. Summaries of statements made by participants were entered into the matrix and were ordered according to their similarity, rather than time occurrence. During this analysis, further memoing and note taking occurred. This facilitated the development of representations and key themes.

Following this process, summary statements of social representations and key themes were generated. Significant statements made by participants that could represent and illustrate these themes were then chosen. Where possible, the relationship to answering the research questions and the commitment to representing the experiences of the participants were foremost in this process. Further facilitation of this research within the framework of social representation theory was also

considered at this time.

In order to establish the credibility of findings, a process of triangulation was undertaken (Lyons, 2000). Here, data is compared or verified with different sources, collection methods or through using different investigators. However, according to Morse (1994, p. 231), "the process of inductive qualitative inquiry depends on insight and the process of linking data." It also requires an intense process of synthesis. Expecting another investigator to have the same understanding is impractical and may also hinder the synthesising process. As such, triangulation occurred by comparing findings to the reflective journal used and through verification with the theoretical framework. Member checking by verifying findings with participants was also undertaken (Morse, 1994).

Findings and Discussion

Specifically, the main aim of this study was to consider what social representations adolescents in a multicultural adolescent peer group held in relation to ethnic, national and cultural identity. Qualitative data from interviews was used to uncover the representations held and to establish where these hailed from. It also informed how these representations shape the adolescents' peer group friendships and further implicate their relationships with other groups present in the wider community.

Consistent with the framework of social representations (Moscovici, 1984), a number of core social representations were uncovered. These included "cultural dominance", "maintaining the status quo" and "cultural tolerance and acceptance". It is important to note, however, that individual agency and individual differences were embedded in these views, highlighting some adolescents' capacity to see past these representations and this positioning. However active demonstrations beyond this agency were somewhat limited. This is featured later in a discussion of the themes relating to friendships, "friends are friends" and group relationships, "crossing borders."

Each social representation was flanked by a number of themes, together creating their figurative nuclei. As well as this, two main ideas permeated the study. These included adolescents' ability to verify minority difference at a more individual, personal level and a general inability to 'see' and value difference at a more abstract, remote level. This may result from adolescents' current cognitive development processes (Rice, 1996), but is an important observation when considering strategies for change. Table 2 summarises the representations, themes and levels of analysis, together with the two other themes that emerged.

Table 2

Social Representations, Themes and Levels of Analysis

Social representation	Themes	Level of analysis
Cultural dominance	Family influence Ethnic identity & cultural origin is for others Defining an 'in-between' status	Ideological at a group level
Maintaining the status quo	Affective attachment to Australia Act and talk like an 'Aussie'	Ideological at an individual level
Cultural tolerance and acceptance	We're multicultural Australians Individual racism and the media Passive acceptance	Ideological at an individual level
Other Themes		
	Friends are friends.	N/A
	Crossing borders. Implications for inter-group relationships.	N/A

Cultural Dominance

Uncovering a position of cultural power and dominance is an ideological level representation operating at a group level (Moscovici, 1984). This is an old, established representation suggestive of the continuing dominant influences of white middle class Australia. It also supports Smolicz's (1997) argument that multiculturalism is still seen from the narrow Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-European lens. This representation was difficult for adolescents to articulate emphasising it does not occur freely. Arguably it may not be a social representation at all (Moscovici, 1984). However it is suggested the concept is so embedded and the topic so rarely discussed, it arose through the artificial circumstances of this study.

Within this representation one of the main themes elicited, family influence, demonstrates the central role of the family cannot be underestimated during adolescent development (Rice, 1996; Shih, 1998). All participants spoke of their families in endearing ways, highlighting the closeness and positive regard they have

for them. This was reflected in the following participants' comments:

My dad's fun and it is really fun sometimes...And my mum's got a hell good sense of humour and always makes me laugh and teaches me really cool jokes and stuff...All the family's like pretty close. Like the rest of my family.

It is just everyone. I don't know...My parents aren't uptight about it. They aren't always on my back sort of stuff.

This closeness was coupled with adolescents' articulation of how influential families are in their identity development, a position verified in the literature (Phinney et al., 2001; Roberts et al., 1999). This included ethnic and cultural identity and was coupled with difficulty in uncovering aspects of family life they disliked, which for the most part revolved around sibling rivalry issues or parents' favouring younger siblings. One adolescent highlighted the positive influence his family had on cultural identity:

Well I suppose it is good having a different cultural background like.... It is more. It is not all just Australian sort of background. There's a lot more history behind it and stuff.

While these influences are instrumental, they may have played a role in difficulties adolescents had in perceiving differences between their family and others in their suburb. It is also emphasised that mobility could have been a factor here, with adolescents having moved an average of three times, including some living outside Australia. Overall, ethnic majority adolescents identified structural and size differences in families they knew or saw around them. Not identifying ethnic minority families in suburbs with high multicultural status could suggest they were exhibiting inclusive approaches to diversity (Jones, 1998). This may be apparent given the middle class status of the participants and their relative advantage.

However, comments suggested ethnic majority adolescents did not 'see' diversity at all, suspecting families were much like them. As Kincheloe (1999) suggests, norms of dominance were in play. This was reversed for ethnic minority adolescents who saw and articulated cultural and ethnic differences, as the following demonstrates:

Like other parents from other backgrounds it is more like easy going for them. Like you can do what you want but for me, my mum and dad are like taking care of everything. Like they are really responsible.

Here, though, this may also be a question of noting differences between the collectivist beliefs of this adolescent's family and the more individualistic laid back approaches of parents of majority group adolescents. A position of negotiation that can be difficult for some minority adolescents and could lead to them letting go of ethnic origins, in favour of this more individualistic lifestyle (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

However, family background was a contributing factor in this representation, and while it was demonstrated by strong family influences for ethnic minority adolescents, for ethnic majority adolescents, families were not just influential but were symbolic of others around them. This dominant group perspective was further highlighted in discussions of ethnic identity and cultural group of origin.

As foreshadowed in the literature, ethnic and cultural identity has been proposed as important in aspects of development for ethnic minority individuals, while majority individuals do not understand them (Perry, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Roberts et al., 1999). While counter arguments suggest it may be possible for dominant group individuals to develop and experience cultural identity, these adolescents could not identify their cultural group of origin. However, all adolescents had great trouble understanding these concepts, particularly ethnic

identity. Here, anchoring and objectifying took place on most occasions as they wrestled with the meaning of ethnic identity (Moscovici, 1984). This excerpt is from an ethnic majority adolescent:

[I] "If I asked you about your ethnic identity, what would you tell me?"

[P] "Umm I am not Christian."

[I] "...Anything else?"

[P] "Umm, I don't really know what you mean."

[I] "What do you think it might mean?"

[P] "Like religion and where you are from and stuff."

[I] "So do you know what the word ethnic means?"

[P] "What it makes me think of that word. It makes me think of Indian people. The way they are."

The following is from an ethnic minority adolescent, born overseas:

[I] "If I asked you about your ethnic identity, what would you tell me?"

[P] "What is it?"

[I] "Have you heard the word ethnic before?"

[P] "Mmmm. (pause) Yeh. But I don't remember."

[I] "You know what identity is though?"

[P] "Yeh. You mean the source, where you are from...I was Israeli. I feel different from the people here. I feel my culture. My whole behaviour is different."

It is clear this was a concept that was unfamiliar to the world of these adolescents and as such took some time for them to comprehend. As adolescents struggled to a better understanding, the concept evolved to an entity solely perceived as belonging to ethnic minorities. A position of 'othering' was taking place (Kincheloe, 1999; Perry,

2001). Given their ability to eventually articulate ethnic identity, it is also likely appropriate development had been reached (Roberts et al., 1999). Ethnic majority adolescents defined it in the following two ways:

It is more about race or colour...I am just white...Or Caucasian or whatever.

Well I have friends that are like other races and stuff. Yeh I mix with people that are from different religions and stuff.

Here we are presented with the common sense notion of who belongs to ethnic identity, in all its vivid imagery (Moscovici, 1984; Roberts et al., 1999). However, it suggests adolescents were applying it more to racial identity, defining people fundamentally by race, or colour (Frable, 1997). A position that possibly makes exclusion easier. In contrast, ethnic minority adolescents developed apt ethnic identity descriptions. This was also apparent for adolescents with an in-between status. The following excerpt shows how ethnic identity helped them define themselves, giving them added dimensions:

If you ask for nationality I would say Australian but if you say ethnic, I would say different. I would say Chinese.

Well on one side I would see myself as pretty much Australian...because I have lived here almost all my life...But then by blood, I am more South African...I see myself as South African. I know probably more about the history of South Africa and more about South Africans' themselves.

This suggests ethnic identity was salient for ethnic minority individuals and formed part of their social identity (Tajfel, 1981), particularly for adolescents that saw themselves as in-between. These individuals saw this in-between status as positive and they gained from it. They did this by retaining their ethnic identity but

at the same time adopting cultural norms and values of the dominant group. Ethnic identity was also mostly important for adolescents born in Australia, to parents from overseas, a position suggesting it is not just about acculturation (Phinney et al., 2001). It was also linked to an authentic assertion to defining themselves based on the positive aspects of their ethnic heritage and the strength of their family influence.

Similarly, the interpretation of cultural group of origin by adolescents further highlighted divisiveness and power differentials between groups. Here, some ethnic majority adolescents became familiar with the construct earlier on, but most still struggled to define it:

[P] "Cultural group? Umm. I don't know. I can't think. I don't know what it means."

[I] "Do you think you have a cultural group?"

[P] "No. Don't know."

[P] Well my cultural group of origin is Australia, so. Cultural group. What's that? Five things that represent my cultural group. Culture. Sort of like different backgrounds. Like Aboriginal people have different culture, even if they don't follow it.

This general lack of understanding helps maintain a position of dominance because it is seen as the norm or general standard of those in the majority (Perry, 2001). It also reflects Moscovici's (1984) idea that what is left out of communication is as important as what is not. In contrast, ethnic minority adolescents clearly identified with cultural origin, suggesting a rationale for its maintenance. The following is from two Australian born adolescents of parents born overseas:

Umm. My culture is close knit... We support each other. Everyone is friends with each other. They are proud of their culture. They stick up for one

another. They fight for each other.

[My cultural origin is] Chinese. I think a lot of people classify Chinese as hard working...A lot of people have that conception. Seeing from a lot of my friends what they have told me...It is pretty obvious about Chinese food and the hard working.

Here we see positive aspects of their cultural group being enhanced, suggesting here at least, strong identification with their own group. However, as will be seen later, with their strong relationships to the majority group, it is also suggestive of an ability to negotiate multiple identities strategically (Tajfel, 1981).

With this now demonstrating the relative importance of cultural origin, ethnic identity and family influence to adolescents, a depiction of the process of this representation is reflected in Figure 1.

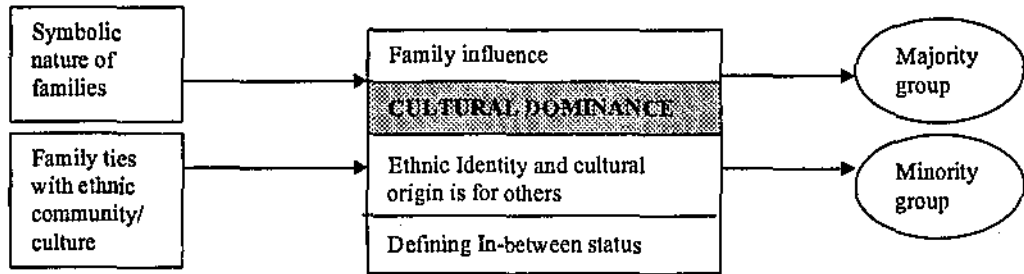


Figure 1. Social representation process - cultural dominance.

While this diagram and the previous discussion demonstrate that ethnic identity and cultural origin were important to ethnic minority individuals, their attachment corresponded to how proud they were of their background and if they felt a sense of belonging to it (Phinney, 1990). It also depended on the pursuance of positive attachment processes by parents, including attachment to their country of origin, adhering to traditions, visiting relatives and mixing with other people from their culture. In contrast, ethnic majority adolescents were unfamiliar with concepts,

and related ethnic identity and cultural origin only to minority individuals. These processes contribute to retaining cultural dominance for majority adolescents, requiring them to do little about understanding their own white identity and little to enhance the status of minorities (Kincheloe, 1999).

Evidently the current cultural environment of Australia has done little but reinforce the continued identification of minority adolescents as 'others', suggesting exclusionary core beliefs are still in play. While this must be seen in conjunction with the strong positive influences of family, the perpetuation of this position does not assist all adolescents to create valid, positive ethnic identities or to equally value identities of other people. This would be an active strategy against divisiveness (Kincheloe, 1999). Given this current dominant stance, it is suggested this social representation will not be changed unless adolescents are engaged to discuss and understand these issues at a deeper level.

While this dominance through maintaining power differentials was more salient for issues of identity closer in proximity to adolescents, when identity issues were more abstract, adolescents revealed a representation akin to perpetuating the stable predictable society they know, further entrenching differences. This representation, maintaining the status quo is indeed linked to the preceding representation of dominance, as it is borne out of a need to continue this powerful stance. It is also likely to have evolved from this earlier social position.

Maintaining the Status Quo

The representation of maintaining the status quo is an ideological level representation that had similar impacts on all peer group individuals. It is based on the notion that the function of society is to maintain stability and harmony (Moscovici, 1984). Hence this position can be achieved by ensuring people conform

to specific national and cultural values and beliefs. However, values and beliefs can be exclusive or inclusive, particularly for minorities (Jayaraman, 2000; Phillips, 1998). Exclusive national beliefs are based on views representing closed attitudes towards Australia, including a dislike for 'foreigners'. Inclusive beliefs are more open, suggesting a valuing of immigrants, if they conform to various norms.

Inclusive beliefs could be a shift from the past, but they are still far from a true appreciation and acceptance. This absence of understanding is fostered through a process of setting specific standards for ethnic minorities or immigrants (Hage, 1998), including what it takes to become Australian and the cultural behaviour to be engaged in. Akin to Berry's (1970, 1990, 2001) acculturation theory, conforming to these processes could negatively impact cultural identity for some minorities.

In uncovering this representation, participants talked about what it meant to be an Australian. As such, relatively inclusive views of what national identity should be, like "being patriotic and nationalistic", "being proud of your country", "upholding Australian values, laws and policies", "residing in Australia" and "becoming a citizen", were revealed. Participants felt views arose from talking to peers and the media. Ethnic minority adolescents shared similar views suggesting their attachment to the dominant group (Tajfel, 1981). This could be from acculturation or their middle class status. It may also be a positioning strategy due to benefits of acquiring this identity status. The following quotes highlight similarities of adolescents' views:

To have Australian citizenship and believe that you are living in Australia and respect the people that are living in Australia. So if you come to Australia and you don't have citizenship, but you want to be an Australian, then you are Australian as long as you follow the laws and follow the rules.

You don't have to get a piece of paper... You can be an Australian ...

Immigrants can be Australian, but they must obey the laws.

Probably like when you represent a country for instance... And I mean like if that country has problems, you stick by that country and stand up. Yeah.

Anybody can if you actually like live in that country and you probably like be proud of that country if you have done something for it. Try and not put the country down you live in.

While these views are consistent with inclusive national identity, it suggests an emphasis on allowing only desirable immigrants to become Australians, providing they do desirable things (Hage, 1998). At this abstract level, diversity and ethnicity were also not mentioned as part of national identity (Thomas & Nikora, 1996), questioning the usefulness of multicultural policies and their lack of deep penetration (Bruer & Power, 1993). However, one ethnic minority adolescent did reflect on this issue showing his individual agency (Rasmussen, 1999). He advised his views came from his experiences and his education, as represented in the following quotation:

You have to like and love your country for what it is. And you have to accept the multiculturalism and stuff that Australia's become. You have to accept all different races that live here. And I guess to be Australian you don't actually have to be white, or Aboriginal or whatever. I guess if you have that sense of nationalism, I suppose and you love your country well.

While this perspective advocates a move to a more inclusive, multicultural society, it could also be borne from Hage's (1998) idea that minorities must accept these traditional norms and standards, or risk exclusion. There is also ambivalence about what colour or race Australians actually should be. Here there is a fusion of the individual with the wider cultural establishment, suggesting that while there is

some letting go of the old, adherence of specific standards is still required.

Building on national identity, participants produced strong images and representations of Australia, demonstrating an affective attachment to their country, its culture and lifestyle (Phillips, 1998). Main images included the “kangaroo”, the “Australian flag”, landscape icons, like “Ulluru” the “beach” and Australian sport, like “cricket”. Participants’ Australian representations demonstrate how images are objectified and express common sense notions of Australia (Moscovici, 1984).

These traditional Australian images show the strong influences of the stable wider context on adolescents’ beliefs and knowledge. However, there was little room for representations of injustice and cultural intolerance. Adolescents advised the source of these images derived from friends and family or the media, highlighting the significant mediating influence this medium has on maintaining the status quo (Emmison, 1997; Sommer, 1998). However, not all adolescents thought this, with the following participants’ discerning the media portrayals:

So if I see it on TV, I don’t have to think it’s Australian. Like if I see Qantas on TV, I don’t think it is Australian, cause it is American. Cause like now John Travolta has it. He is like a new symbol of it.

The media uses heaps of images and they pick them up and make heaps of connections.

Undeniably though, the media’s power to circulate definitive icons of history, patriotism and stability is still influential and continues to undermine substantial change in this country. A position which may become more influential, as mass media becomes more entertaining (Lloyd, 2002). However, the continued promulgation of negative representations, by people, contributes to this position.

While affective attachment to nationhood was clear, a consistent perspective

of Australian cultural identity further entrenches tradition. Adolescents articulated the sources of cultural identity as the media and friends. This was reflected in symbols representing "Australian sport", an "outdoor lifestyle", "freedom" and "being healthy" and "well off", supporting the notion that globalisation has not impacted these aspects of culture (Emmison, 1997). Given these findings it is now salient to highlight the process of this representation in its entirety in Figure 2.

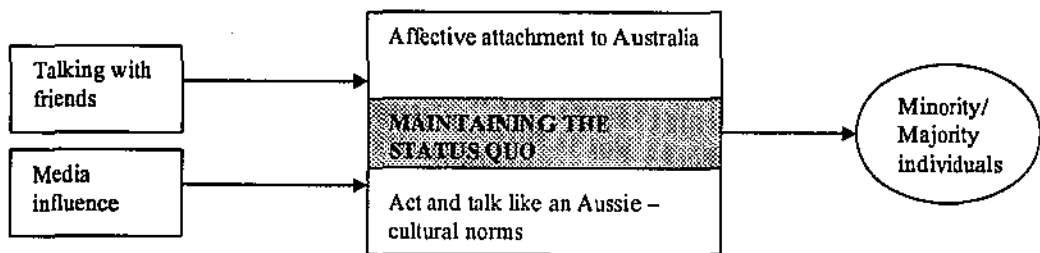


Figure 2. Social representation process – maintaining the status quo.

While it is evidenced that Australian cultural identity, like national identity stems from a number of sources and implicated all adolescents in the group, of further interest was the finding that ethnic majority adolescents were able to demonstrate an Australian culture, a position they could not articulate when asked about their cultural group of origin. The following represents most adolescents' thoughts on this subject:

The spirit of Australia sort of thing. I suppose activity like sport is a big thing. Like we are all into our sports...I would say wanting to become something. Like the great Aussie dream...I suppose the laid back sort of thing.

While these related to notions of culture and lifestyle, the following suggests this should be represented in behaviour:

...Like you have to do Australian stuff.... Follow the Australian way...Like

you can't just be. You have to be like kind of doing kind of like...Nup.

Australia is gay [bad] or something. You can't really say that...

This position could be consistent with Thomas's (1986) view that all can acquire cultural identity. However given ethnic majority adolescents' difficulty in attaching Australian culture to identity, it suggests a lack of understanding of the connections. This may be borne out of a position where there is no need to communicate about them at all (Perry, 2001). Notwithstanding, the support and promotion of one culture equates to a lack of value and appreciation of minority culture in Australia. Although this is arguably a position only highlighting difference (Jones, 1998), as most adolescents did not 'articulate other lifestyles or ways of life in Australia, this suggests the strong exclusionist influence of the majority (Hage, 1998) and a reluctance to entertain any position of change.

Unlike national identity, where adolescents revealed less exclusive views, perspectives held about cultural identity reflect a position of careful management by the dominant group, who by advocating sameness in cultural practices, can ensure acceptable behaviours remain entrenched and promoted. This could have clear ramifications for ethnic minority adolescents who must adopt a standard positive cultural identity, or risk being ostracised, possibly from their peer group. A position that could lead to withdrawal and alienation (Newman & Newman, 2001).

Further, to truly value minorities, we must not just value their cultural beliefs we must stop occupying the central position in these evaluations (Hage, 1998). As will be seen, while this should be one of the outcomes of multiculturalism, it has only lead to the evolution of a new social representation, cultural tolerance and acceptance. Borne out of the cultural dominance representation, it has links to this older, traditional position, but is also attached to the maintenance of stability,

ensuring little indeed changes. A somewhat subtler, but just as effective representation, that implicates not only identity but also true progress in improved inter-group relationships.

Cultural Tolerance and Acceptance

With its links to the other representations, cultural tolerance and acceptance is also an ideological representation highlighting adolescents' individual perceptions of a position of cultural tolerance and acceptance, through strategies of multiculturalism. This is an emergent representation clearly embedded in the language and communication of Australian culture, advocating a fair go for all and an assumed welcoming of people from all backgrounds (Vasta, 1993).

As part of this representation, adolescents' uncovered positive general images of people in Australia, including people "being multicultural", "doing good things" and having a "healthy lifestyle." They then went on further to highlight individual racism was still occurring. Ideologically, this places the powerful in a convenient position, allowing them to convince themselves and others that multiculturalism is a fine strategy and 'real' racism is at the other end of the continuum. However, Hage (1998) argues, multiculturalism is not far removed from racism, with its tolerance of the 'other' in spaces occupied by those with power. When one's power is threatened and tolerance is no longer acceptable, racism results.

Evidence for this is now demonstrated by considering the positive images of Australians uncovered, with adolescents suggesting these came from their interactions with friends and the media, particularly TV. Images from an ethnic majority adolescent are reflected in the following quote:

Most of them are healthy I think... Welcoming for other people in Australia. Pretty lenient about their stuff and respectful about others'

opinions. Multicultural. Like all other nations. India, China, Japan, America, Canada and Switzerland.

Here we can see that 'multicultural' has become objectified (Moscovici, 1984). It is now a free-floating entity that can be owned and is also part of how we behave. This subsequent quote from an ethnic minority adolescent reflects similar positive images but informs of his agency (Rasmussen, 1999) in forming beliefs:

Images of people...Lots of cultures together in one place...Accomplishing things...Built the snowy mountain scheme...Oh yeh. The Chinese because of the gold rush...They helped Australia by bringing in lots of money.

When asked where images had arisen from he said "they just come when you read stuff about Australia. Like about the history of Australia...And just seeing Australians, you think of these things."

While adolescents demonstrated seemingly positive multicultural images, these are at odds with their construction of a strong national identity, where specific requirements must be met or undertaken by minorities to enable them to call themselves Australian. Arguably, adolescents only elicited multicultural images, if they pertained to more concrete, individual concepts. This may be a function of their cognitive development (Rice, 1996; Roberts et al., 1999; Waldinger et al., 2002).

Alternatively, Hage (1998) may be right that the ideology of multiculturalism, filtered to adolescents through the media, allows majority adolescents to define 'others' as they see fit. This corresponds nicely with their perception that minorities must achieve specific standards in order to acquire national identity. Given ethnic minority adolescents in this study thought similarly, it may be they have accepted this rhetoric or they may have enough power not to be harmed by it. Alternatively they may use it as a strategy to gain and retain acceptance, important in their development

(Newman & Newman, 2001).

This argument supporting the notion that multiculturalism and racism are both means of dominance is further amplified by the strong negative images uncovered by adolescents. While some talked of youth gang stereotyping, strongest negative images were of overt racism. This related to individual racism perpetuated towards Aboriginal people. However, it was also seen as something ethnic minorities bring on themselves or misinterpret. The following quote from an Australian participant, demonstrates how he talked about these images:

Ethnic people can be violent...Not all...but some of them...Some of them have bad habits...They just have different standards to what we have...They think that they can bring it here but they can't...They can but this is our country...This is like Australia...Well they have to change like their standards...I think they can be rude sometimes...And they always think that we are being racist, but we are not.

Here we can now see the connection between multiculturalism and racism (Hage, 1998). Multiculturalism is fine as long as 'you' don't invade my space or undermine my standards. However, as will be seen, this racism is only overt and is always perpetuated by other people. The following dialogue emphasises this:

[I] "What are the negative images you have?"

[P] ""Racial things. Like people calling black people nasty things. Other white people teasing other races...People doing things that I have seen. Ah like some of my friends making fun of Aboriginals and stuff and Chinese people."

[I] "How much does this go on?"

[P] "Ah you probably find it in most communities. At least one or a couple

of racial people.”

[I] “How often in your community?”

[P] “Well hopefully not too much. Not too much I don’t think.”

From another participant asked about negative images of people:

[P] [Other people] “They can be rude. They can be racist. Especially with Aboriginals. Especially I have noticed recently. School and places. What people say.”

[I] “And why do you think people are racist to Aboriginals?”

[P] “I don’t know. They just are. They always have. White people always disliked the Aboriginal people for whatever they see. They just see the Aboriginals that just smoke dope or hurt people and don’t go to school.”

This adolescent however, went on to invoke his agency in seeing past this stereotype:

I know some of them do [smoke dope/truant and bash people] but it is not the majority. Yeh cause I respect Aboriginal people. Cause people [adolescents] look at them real funny. Like they say all sorts of stuff...

This statement also advances the argument that stereotyping according to race and physical features is ingrained and entrenched here, implicated in group relations (Tajfel, 1981). However, while all adolescents talked of racism, with some giving evidence of seeing it happen to friends, most suggested the media was responsible for perpetuating it. Nevertheless, they demonstrated their awareness of media bias, and a reluctance to accept these images. A position Sommer (1998) suggests may arise from their direct experience with this issue:

Well I think the media probably makes Aboriginal people portrayed not as well as they should be. I think they deserve better.

They show the bad side of everything on TV. They always show the bad

stuff. To get a negative image....[But] Some people just go nup. Shouldn't believe that. Like I don't believe it.

This awareness shows while social knowledge, is perpetuated by media vehicles, it may not always continue to be refined and further advanced by all adolescents. A process that somewhat reduces the power of this representation, now shown in Figure 3.

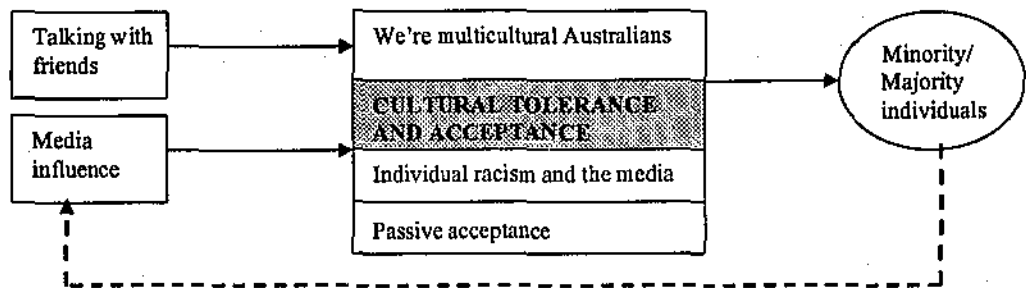


Figure 3. Social representation process -- cultural tolerance and acceptance

While the diagram indicates, as part of this representation, adolescents saw racism perpetuated by individuals, the conundrum is adolescents identified the media as significantly responsible for its perpetuation. So at an abstract level, adolescents could not see the influence of larger systems and the covert racism being maintained, but could identify one of the most influential systems in promulgating stereotypical images (Lloyd, 2002). Also, while adopting this strategy, there was a general perception there was "not a lot of racism". The issue requires little attention.

Given this notion of racism and with multicultural policies doing the job, is it any wonder adolescents are reasonably complacent. Particularly ethnic majority adolescents, who are less likely to see that multicultural Australia is perpetuated by the voices of the strong, to continue perpetuating these voices. An argument that also ignores Aboriginal people (Hage, 1998). While this conception also seems to have little affect on minority adolescents, this could implicate negatively on their identity

(Newman & Newman, 2001), particularly ethnic identity which they may be ambivalent to retain. Discrimination has become a conventional acceptable reality in Australia (Moscovici, 1984). It is also borne out in adolescents' inter-group relationships. These findings are now discussed.

Friends are Friends

The peer group is important for adolescents' identity development including its role in learning new culture for minorities and for forming friendships, leading to the development of intimacy (Buhrmester, 1996; Harris, 1995; Hays, 1988; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996; Shulman et al., 1997; Suzuki, 1997). Here, adolescents demonstrated friendship factors consistent with research like "shared activities", "trust and loyalty", "humour and fun", and "support and acceptance." Communication was a minor factor, showing males lessened interested in this activity (Buhrmester, 1996; Hays, 1988; Shulman et al., 1997).

However, while ethnic majority adolescents indicated factors like race and ethnicity were unimportant to friendship, ethnic minority adolescents did not mention these, instead highlighting issues of social status and competition. This could be linked to their collectivist backgrounds or possibly conformity (Hays, 1988; Young et al., 1998). A majority adolescent talked of what was not important to friendships:

[P] "Race...Because everyone is the same. Like even a different person...Doesn't matter what country you are from. You are an individual."

[I] "Would you ever talk to your friends about that?"

[P] "No. You don't really care because it doesn't matter where they are from."

Jones (1998) would see this as beneficial if it is similarity that is being appreciated. Here, however, adolescents lack awareness of cultural and ethnic

backgrounds, important to value and share. This would also lessen the "othering."

With some differences in friendship importance, it was friends knowing ethnic origins and if it mattered if friends had similar or different backgrounds where major differences arose. Here representations of cultural dominance and tolerance and acceptance were in play. Ethnic majority adolescents did not care if friends knew their ethnic origin, but minority adolescents did. Ethnic majority adolescents were also more likely to construct overt positions of not caring about backgrounds friends came from, but alluded to 'wanting' similar friends. Ethnic minority adolescents were more open about the value of friends from similar backgrounds (Phinney et al., 2001). Following is what one majority adolescent said about friends knowing his ethnicity, him knowing theirs and how much he talked about it:

[P] "Not important at all. Don't care...If they want to find out, they will ask.

They don't care about whether you are black or white. It doesn't come up."

[I] "What about your friends knowing your ethnic origin?"

[P] "They don't care. As long as someone is not a racist to them."

[I] "Is there anytime you would talk about it?"

[P] "Well maybe when you first meet them. You say, "where are you from?"

They go "oh China". And that is about it"

Participants noted talking about ethnicity only occurs when a person was new to the school. After that little communication takes place, though arguably this is less important than shared activities (Buhrmester, 1996; Hays, 1988; Shulman et al., 1997). In contrast, ethnic minority adolescents emphasised the importance of communicating this information, as is now revealed:

It is quite important....Cause you don't want them to insult like where you are from and what you do in your country. And I suppose you have to let

them know sometimes if they have gone too far.

This not only shows how important this is for minority adolescents but also their sensitivity in assisting friends to better understand what is acceptable and what is not.

In a similar vein, adolescents talked about whether it matters if friends have a similar or different background to themselves. The following quotes from ethnic majority and minority adolescents respectfully, represent findings:

It is not really that important at all... Well it might make me feel a bit uneasy if they go off and do Chinese things, but I am sure it wouldn't really affect me greatly. I would probably prefer them to be all the same but it doesn't really matter if they aren't.

That's pretty important to have friends from the same culture [similar backgrounds]. It is good to have friends from the same culture so that you can relate to them.

Here, while majority adolescents are less perturbed if friends hail from different backgrounds, ethnic minority adolescents saw the benefits of these engagements (Hamm, 2000). A position that helps sustain their positive ethnic identity (Frable, 1997). Importantly, though their willingness to share this type of knowledge with ethnic majority adolescents seems lost on them. Through displays of loyalty and trust (Jones, 1998) they are content in the knowledge that all that is needed is a multicultural stance. The final quote sums up majority adolescents' sentiments:

I don't care if people are black or white. Or if they do certain things.

I don't care. Cause they are my friends and that is that. End of it for me.

Crossing Borders – Implications for Inter-group Relations

While the investigation of this peer group revealed, despite difficulties,

adolescents had formed close relationships, it was pondered if these relationships would move beyond the boundaries of the school environment to the wider community. Arguably, if this occurred, adolescents would show some agency towards dispelling representations held. However, adolescents did not reflect this assumption, giving no support for Bronfenbrenner's (1979) hypotheses.

Generally, adolescents were unable to volunteer much information about other ethnic groups in their communities. Of the information provided, most was stereotypical, highlighting in-group/out-group biases were in play (Tajfel, 1981). The following quotes provide another view highlighted by adolescents from ethnic majority and minority backgrounds about differences between ethnic groups:

Some of them are much like Australians...Like very friendly and like to have a laugh and stuff like that...

I understand that most of the ethnic groups become quite Australian. They don't really show a difference like any distinct traits of their country...But I mean if it was any other country it would be the same.

This notion supports the representations of dominance and maintaining the status quo and was further reinforced, by adolescents' indicating they mix little with other ethnic groups outside school, suggesting group biases are in play (Tajfel, 1981). While mobility could have impacted here, adolescents gave alternate reasons. The following quotes from ethnic minority and majority adolescents respectfully, relay their reasons:

No...I suppose I don't really relate with their ethnic backgrounds...I like my own background. There's just nothing in common with them...So I don't see any point in me going to stuff like that.

No...Apart from what school says...Like NAIDOC week or

something... Probably because I am not really interested in that sort of stuff cause it doesn't matter to me. Like what ethnic group... If you are Australian then whatever...

From these responses, the school is the major source of inter-group relations for adolescents. While this could be the school philosophy (Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987) or that moving beyond the immediate environment is not conducive to adolescents' current development, it is arguably the impact of deeper, cultural factors suggesting representations are barriers to these processes (Hamm, 2000; Moscovici, 1984). A position that is detrimental to not only adolescent identity but to adolescent relationships. One ethnic minority adolescent nicely highlighted these barriers:

[P] "They try really hard to be in the environment...Join with everybody. But they are really blocked."

[I] "And what is the thing that blocks them?"

[P] "The people."

Paradoxically, this response elucidates the central thesis of this study. While issues of identity and relationships are often viewed at an individual level, they are also subsumed within dominant systems and contexts operating to exclude people or remove them from power sources. This can lead to negative implications particularly for ethnic minority individuals. While analysing the context is one way to avoid this unproductive focus, it is emphasised that contexts are created and re-created by people within them, like the adolescent peer group in this study. However, contexts must be placed as a central focus otherwise any strategies to impart change will be ineffective.

General Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the social representations that adolescents in a multicultural peer group held in relation to ethnic, national and cultural identity and what the sources of these representations were. It also sought to understand what the implications of representations would be for friendship and inter-group relationships. Given the qualitative nature of this investigation, findings are not generalisable beyond the study group however a number of observations are highlighted.

While participants talked in seemingly straightforward ways about identity, the subtle nuances of language demonstrated the strong impact representations of cultural dominance and maintaining the status quo have upon thoughts and behaviour. As Moscovici (1984, p. 35) suggests "...those who speak and those who are spoken of are forced into an identity matrix over which they have not chosen and over which they have no control." Moscovici (1984) further advises it is what is not spoken about that is valuable. Here, talk of culture reflected the dominant group and minorities and their culture were left out of the dialogue. While these representations hail from past ideologies, they are entrenched and are powerful influences circulating in society. They make it easy in Australia to locate minorities in positions, external to power and control.

Furthermore, though Australia has supposedly embraced social change through multiculturalism and progressed beyond exclusionary practices, adolescents talk was representative of a subtle but still discriminating form of exclusion and inclusion; cultural tolerance and acceptance (Hage, 1998). Dressed up as a value of equity and fairness for all, its covert and surreptitious nature is possibly more alarming than other representations, as it is difficult to understand at this abstract, refined level. However, it is easier to notice when positions of power come under

threat, like recent situations involving 'illegal immigrants' or 'boat people'. It is suggestive of Australian society's a progression to more covert and perspicacious ways of managing and retaining power, unless it is threatened.

While adolescents understood some aspects of this representation, they could not make deeper connections between political or ideological rhetoric and the perpetuation of systemic racism in Australia. A position likely shared by many others in this country. This is a complex issue, however it is suspected that particularly for the majority, it is also not having a need to wrestle with and face these issues. A position that must be dismantled and challenged to focus more on the implications. Examining whiteness is a way of doing this (Kincheloe, 1999).

As a result of this research, adolescents were able to negotiate and maintain inter-group friendships, for some out of dominance or agency and understanding. For ethnic minorities this was more a strategy to ensure acceptance and to fit in (Newman & Newman, 2001). However, management of inter-group friendships was limited to school and was not repeated in further explorations of wider community relationships, a position evident in wider society. This textbook demonstration of inter-group relations is reflective of the imposing barriers to relationships that have been constructed through the social representation held. This is not conducive to changing the inclusive/exclusive nature of these relationships. This position is highly fostered and mediated by the electronic media (Sommer, 1998).

The implications of these results for identity development are for adolescents to be able to develop and maintain strong positive identities and to appreciate identities of all people there must be a deeper level of understanding and discussion of these issues. The research indicates while adolescents, particularly ethnic majority adolescents, struggled with abstract concepts like ethnic identity, they did come to

understand these given time. While research has suggested these concepts do not apply to majority adolescents (Perry, 2001), is there any wonder if there seems little need, if there is little discussion or if concepts are difficult to negotiate and interpret.

Furthermore, through adolescents interpretations of national and cultural identity, "seeing everyone as the same" or "just like me" may be a useful strategy for some aspects of adolescent identity development, where it is important to belong to the group. However it is also possibly harmful in the context of individual development and friendships as it negates any value to be attached to people in respect of their unique culture and ethnicity. This is offered with the caveat it is not about tokenism, but real value, only achieved by letting go of power and dominance.

It is argued for progress in adolescents' relationships, including moving beyond obstacles in the wider community, change needs to occur here. One adolescent suggested there are barriers to mixing with others and these are detrimental to relationships. They may even lead to isolation or a rejection of minority groups. It is suggested that fundamental changes at the level of how adolescents perceive each other will impact these relationships.

Aside from these implications, a methodological issue of this study was its attempt to utilise a maximum variety sample and at the same time use an intact adolescent peer group. Given these requirements, at times a trade off occurred, with decisions made as to if it was better to use more 'diverse background' adolescents, in and on the group's periphery, or to select from the core of the group. With diversity a priority, this strategy may have had implications for the findings. It was at times difficult to speculate if variables like acculturation or other influences like family were most salient. This was borne from their different backgrounds and birth place.

Another issue related to using Moscovici's (1984) social representation

model. While it allows for a unique way of analysis, it has problems with causality. It is difficult to know if social representations are the cause giving us the effect, or vice versa. Another disadvantage is its flexibility, resulting in difficulties when determining how much impact themes, like family influence, have. In comparison, narrative theory (Rappaport, 1993) allows for the detailed sequencing of stories, providing information on their temporal and historical nature. Narrative theory is less abstract, making it easier to interpret. This would be beneficial if wishing to focus on white identity. This approach can also view which concepts, lead to change.

The findings of this study have implications for addressing these issues. In particular, while education curricula do consider issues of discrimination, they do not focus well on the intersection of the wider context and the individual. These issues need to be discussed at a more involved, engaged and ongoing level. Discussions about issues of race, culture and ethnicity need to be opened up for all adolescents, in an effort to help them broaden their understanding of these issues. Particularly for these adolescents, who will go on to inhabit positions of power in larger systems.

Perhaps future research could analyse these issues by manipulating the variable of class. The middle class adolescents in this study are all relatively advantaged. It would also be interesting to investigate this issue with a multicultural group of less advantaged adolescents to see if there are differences here.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Letter

Dear Participant

My name is Christine Callow and I am a psychology Honours student at Edith Cowan University. As part of my studies at university, I am interested in talking to young people about their family and ethnic backgrounds and also their friendship experiences. The Faculty Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University has approved this study.

As such, I would like to interview you. If you agree, I will tape record our conversation to make sure I record accurately what you say. I have 20 questions to ask you, and this should take approximately 60 minutes. The information you give me is confidential and only two people, my supervisor and myself, will have access to the information. I will use a code name for you, rather than your real name, at all times. The name of your school and any information about it will also be kept confidential and will not be identified at any time.

If you are prepared to talk with me, all you need to do is to fill in and sign the attached form. This shows that you understand what will happen. Although you may agree to be part of this study, you are free to withdraw from it at any time, without penalty. At the end of this study, a report of the results will be available upon request. This report may also be published, but in no way will you, or any other participant, be identifiable.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on telephone number 9204 1560 or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, at the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Christine Callow

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have
read the information attached and any questions I have asked have been answered to my
satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, realising that I may withdraw from the study
at any time, removing any information I have provided, without penalty. **As part of my
participation, I agree for my interview to be tape recorded and transcribed.** I also agree
that the research data gathered for this study may be published, provided myself my family or
my school is not identifiable.

.....Date
Participant

..... Date.....
Christine Callow

*Note: If you have any queries about this consent form or the process of consent for this
project, please feel free to contact Dr Craig Speelman, Head of the School of Psychology,
Edith Cowan University, Joondalup on telephone number 9400 5724.*

Appendix C

Parent Information Letter

Dear Parent

My name is Christine Callow and I am a psychology Honours student at Edith Cowan University. As part of my university studies, I am interested in talking to young people about their family and ethnic backgrounds and also their friendship experiences. The Faculty Ethics Committee at Edith Cowan University has approved this study.

As such, I would like to interview your child. Interviews will be tape recorded so I can accurately report what is said. The interview involves 20 questions and will take approximately 60 minutes. Any information given, by you or your child, is strictly confidential. At no time will your child's name be mentioned, as pseudonyms will be used. Only two people, my supervisor and myself, will have access to the information. The name of your child's school and any information about it will also be kept confidential and will not be identified at any time.

If you decide to let your child participate, please fill out and sign the attached form. Please make sure you give a contact telephone number, so that I can ring and arrange an interview time with your child. At the end of this study, a report of the results will be available upon request. This report may also be published, but in no way will your child, or any other participant, be identifiable.

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and either he or you are free to withdraw your consent for your child's participation, together with any information already provided, at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on telephone number 9204 1560 or my supervisor, Dr Christopher Sonn, at the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, on 9400 5105.

Yours sincerely

Christine Callow

Appendix D

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Ihave read the information attached and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to give consent for my child.....to participate in this study, realising I may withdraw consent for my child to participate at any time, without penalty. As part of my child's participation, I agree for their interview to be tape recorded and transcribed. I also agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided my child, my family or my child's school is not identifiable.

.....Date.....
Parent/Guardian

.....Date.....
Christine Callow

Note: If you have any queries about this consent form or the process of consent for this project, please feel free to contact Dr Craig Speelman, Head of the School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup on telephone number 9400 5724.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW QUESTION SCHEDULE

1. Could you tell me a little about your family background?
2. What are the things you like most about being a member of your family?
3. What are the things that you like least?
4. What makes your family different to other families in your suburb?
5. If I asked you about your ethnic identity, what would you tell me?
6. What do you think it means to be an Australian?
7. Could you tell me five things representing Australia?
8. Could you tell me five positive images of people in Australia?
9. Could you tell me five negative images of people in Australia?
10. If I asked you to list five things representing your community group of origin, what would they be?
11. In the peer group you hang out in, what are the things that are important to your friendships?
12. In this group, what are the things that are not important to your friendships?
13. What do you like most about your friends?
14. What do you like least about your friends?
15. How important is it to you that your friends know your ethnic origin?
16. How important is it to you that your friends have a similar or different background to yours?
17. Could you tell me five positive things about your ethnic group?
18. Could you tell me five negative things about your ethnic group?
19. Could you tell me five positive things about other ethnic groups in your community?
20. Could you tell me five negative things about other ethnic groups in your community?